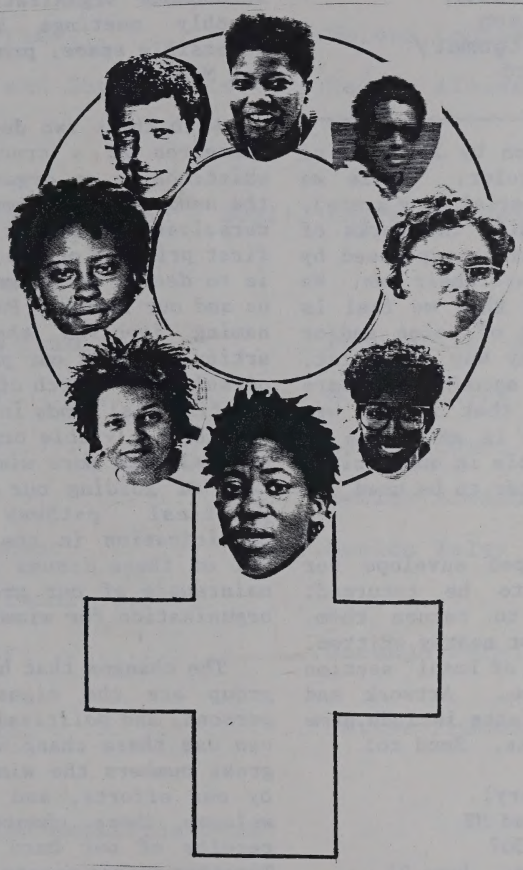
IMANI

vol 1. no. 2 June, 1990

A monthly publication by lesbians of color



WE ARE LESBIANS, WE ARE PROUD

CELEBRATING GAY PRIDE

IMANI

STAFF SISTAHS

Kelley Alexander
Monica Ealey
Patricia A. Jackson
Ami R. Mattison
Helen Louise Montgomery
Laura Howard

This is a monthly publication by lesbians of color for all wimmin of color. While we recognize all unsolicited material (any genre), we are committed to publishing the works of lesbians of color. The opinions expressed by contributors and columnists are their own. We will not print any material that we feel is insulting to us as lesbians of color and/or that can be construed in any way as racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. We encourage readers to respond to any material that in any way feels insulting. The media is an avenue of empowerment in becoming visible in our society and we wish for this newsletter to be used for that purpose.

Send a self-addressed stamped envelope for submissions if they are to be returned; otherwise, we are unable to return them. Submissions should be typed or neatly written. Material submitted for "Youth of Imani" section should include name and age. Artwork and photographs are welcomed. Please include name and address on all submissions. Send to:

IMANI (Montgomery)
411 Ridgewood Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30307
Deadline for next issue: June 21

FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Within our community of wimmin of color, formerly organized as the Women of Color Caucus, enormous changes have occured over the past several months. For some time we have debated the issues of accessibility and autonomy. We have asked ourselves: Do we want to continue on our own political pathway as the sole authority for our decisions and actions? Are we committed to making our group accessible to all wimmin, including those of us who are differently-abled? At the June meeting, those questions were answered by a resounding and emphatic "YES" as we decided, by unanimous vote, to redefine our political relationship with the African-American Lesbian and Gay Alliance (AALGA) by declaring ourselves as an autonomous organization and to hold our monthly meetings in the wheelchair-accessible space, provided by Charis Books and More.

With these two decisions made, we find ourselves at a crucial juncture in our existence as an organization committed to the needs of all wimmin of color. We find ourselves in need of a new name, and the first priority on the June meeting's agenda is to decide on a name that best describes us and our issues. Part of this process of naming involves the understanding and articulating of our purpose. Also, we find ourselves in search of some ways to increase our financial funds in order to continue our growth as a viable organization. Finally, we challenge more wimmin to commit to the task of guiding our group along our own political pathway through active participation in the steering committee. All of these issues are important to the maintenace of our group as a progressive organization for wimmin of color.

The changes that have swept through our group are the signs of our growth in personal and political power. Together, we can use these changing times to expand in great numbers the wimmin who are affected by our efforts, and we must embrace and welcome these changes as the positive results of our hard and committed work. Together we can create a community of wimmin of color, loving and supporting each other, working in solidarity to affect changes for all wimmin's lives.

Your Steering Committee,
Sandy Enos
Patricia A. Jackson
Ami R. Mattison

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Corrections and Amplifications:

Some photographs that appeared in the May issue of Imani were taken by Cynthia Cole.

LESBIAN PRIDE

By Helena Louise Montgomery

The topic of Gay Pride receives international focus during the month of June; therefore, it is fitting that this issue of IMANI embrace it as its theme.

It is amazing how difficult a task can become; especially when, at its inception it is perceived to be quite simple. Although this is the finished product, it is neither my original nor my second idea - but simply the one that agreed to flow from within.

During the past few weeks, I have asked myself: What does Gay Pride mean to me? The more I pondered this question, the more difficult it became for me to answer. I struggled with it to the point of assuming that I had finally come up against the dreaded "writers block". Refusing to give up, I finally realized I was attempting to write this piece from my head - what I thought Gay Pride was to others; as opposed to writing from my heart - what Gay Pride means to me.

Writing from my head, I was placing my pride in being lesbian into a cubical, just the way society places me in one. My Lesbian Pride cannot be separated from my entire being. I cannot dissect and explore that part of me without looking at myself in my entirety. While my Lesbian Pride is significant, it is but an integral part of my whole.

I also discovered that the term "GAY PRIDE', like many other uses of the English language, is male - identified, i.e., "homosexual" equals male; "Gay" equals male. It is the word "Lesbian" that actually denotes my gender. So, when asking myself what "GAY PRIDE" means to me, I was not even referring to myself with that question. By taking the universal term and transposing it into one that reflects my being - LESBIAN PRIDE - I can, at least, begin to answer the question: What does LESBIAN PRIDE mean to me?

My Lesbian Pride is part and parcel to my pride in being born in the late 1940' to a father of the Cherokee Indian Nation and a mother of African descent. Being birthed at that time, in this world's story, has given me: 1) The experience of actively participating in the 60's Civil Rights Movement, 2) the after effects of the Vietnam War - that male members of my family suffer from and, 3) the heartache when individuals who chose to speak and move against this white supremacist, sexist, homophobic, racist, society were assassinated.

In the midst of all this violent chaos, Lorraine Hansberry, Alvin Ailey, Audre Lorde, James Baldwin, and innumerable unsung heroes courageously stated who they were besides their Blackness, besides their gender. They were proud Gays and Lesbians creating for a society that mocked, ridiculed, and insulted our lifestyles, while hypocritically praising them for their artistic contributions.

I was born during a period in which many chose not to live their lives in fear by hiding all of who they are and refused to perpetuate their own self-hatred.

I was born during a period when Lesbians were degradingly called Bulldaggers, Blacks called niggers, the indigenous people of North America called savages, and being female was synonymous to being non-existent.

To survive this period, knowing that before my 10th birthday, I too, would be called Bulldagger and chose not to live in fear, I can only say when asked: What does Lesbian Pride/Gay Pride mean to me? It means: not living my life in fear,

not choosing to ride on the backs, as a parasite, of those who lived their lives openly, before me. It means to contribute to the ground-breaking efforts it takes to live my life as freely as possible. It means not hiding, not silencing myself when a situation - good or bad - calls for me to stand up for who I am. It means to be VISIBLE.

As a young girl, I knew no one could call me nigger without me going up one side of their head and down the other. As a young girl, I knew my sexual preference was against the socially acceptable norm - but that would and will not stop me.

To live my life in fear is not to live my life freely. Not to live my life openly is to not lend support to those who have already taken many risks. My LESBIAN PRIDE is PRIDE in myself - deserving of all the human rights as anyone else.

Poetry by Angie Nevarez

MUJER - SUELO

Eres mujer suelo
que alimenta mis sueños
Eres sólida entraña
Y partícula líquida
Siendo materia y ancla
me devuelves la vida

Eres mujer suelo
que deshoja sentidos
Eres pulpa naciente
y obscuridad de mito
Mujer de noche y día
Refugio de quebrantos
Nostalgia que adivina
Conociendo las secretas
que desde antes del tiempo me iluminan
Conoces de las lluvias
que brotan de mis sienes
Conoces las mareas de mi fauna etérea
Conoces de mi suelo las centellas

Eres mujer suelo
que redime mis ansias
Eres fulgor nocturno
y tranquilidad de aspas
Eres ceniza y vuelo
Eres rumor y desvelo
de cristal anochecido
Eres agua
Y eres fuego

Eres mujer suelo
que alimenta mis sueños
Eres mujer consuelo
de mis horas.

WOMAN - SOIL

You are woman soil
that feeds my dreams
You are solid entrail
and liquid particle
Being matter and anchor
you return life to me

You are woman soil
that lays bare the senses
You are emerging flesh
and mythical darkness
Woman of night and day
Refuge from sorrow
Prophetic longing
You possess the secrets
that since the beginning of time
shine upon me
You know the rains
that erupt from my brow
You know the tides
of my ethereal fauna
You know the cinders
of my ground

You are woman soil
that redeems my pains
You are nocturnal radiance
and dormant whirls
You are ashes and flight
You are rumour and wakefulness
of crystal at nightfall
You are water and fire

You are woman soil
that feeds my dreams
You are woman solace
of my hours.

ANGIE is a student at Duke University, earning her Ph.D in Latin American literature.

The Long and Short of It

by Kelley Alexander

We wear braids, fades, and 'fros. We perm it, bleach it, press it, and weave it. Naturals, curls, and intricately sculptured works of art. Our hair! Coiffed, fried, and laid to the side. Gone is the time when you could determine a sister's "political persuasion" by the size of her afro. No longer is a particular hairstyle a salute to a movement. With the 90's comes a multiplicity of hairstyles that represent the ideal of individuality.

In talking to women about their choice of hairstyle, I received a range of replies: a personal statement, a low-maintenance objective, a political decision, and a fashion statement. This, to me, indicates a trend toward individuality. (One woman I spoke with said "because my wife prefers it this way"; but this response was in the minority.)

Historically speaking (or was it just my grandmother?), a woman choosing to cut her hair was either "funny" or who could determine what else. This school of thought was directly related, it seems, to the concept of masculinity and femininity inasmuch as men feeling the desire to confirm a woman's appearance; not willing to release the "power" that their short-cropped, easy-to-maintain hair afforded them. A woman's duty was to remain distinctively feminine so that "her man" could continue to be controlingly masculine.

Through the 70's, our hair was directly related to our consciousness (I thought I would die when I discovered my hair was not consistent with achieving an afro; I eventually decided my heart was in the right place and was overjoyed to find that I was not considered a dissident). Unfortunately, I still hear comments by people of color that insinuate a black woman is obliged to wear her hair a certain way (the controversy is usually "natural" versus "permed"; however, I have heard many comments about sisters and their dreadlocks, which is really hard to believe). But happily, I think these kinds of attitudes, which remind me of how some non-people of color assume that all African-Americans should play basketball, eat watermelon, and have rhythm, seem to be on the decline.

The bottom line: acceptance of ourselves and our choices. Strength in our self-proclaimed birthright to choose the hairdo that is best for us--and to know what that is. Courage to sport our locks with pride and our waves with sass. And this sass does not stop at our hairstyles, but extends to our choices of who we love and what we do with our bodies.

Women I know are refusing to be driven by what has, in the past, been viewed as "unfeminine" "nappy", or "aspiring to imitate Anglo-American values". We are now coming to the empowering realization that we are "beauty" in all of our hues and hairdos.

Jeopardea Time

So, how did you do last issue with Jeopardea? Who's one up, Jeopardea or you? Here are the questions from the May, issue:

Question #1 for 10 points: Who is Ann Allen Shockley in the short story "Play It, But Don't Say It" in The Black and White of It?
Question #2 for 25 points: Who is Mitsuye Yamada?
Question #3 for 25 points: Who is Alice Walker?
Question #4 for 35 points: Who is Chrystos?

(under 25 points---well, wimmin the Library is located on Peachtree and Forsyth.....) But don't be discouraged, here's your chance to redeem yourself or continue to soar--

Category #1: HALL OF FAME

Announced on March 28, 1990, she is one of 4 wimmin inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame, the only national institution devoted to honoring the accomplishments of American wimmin. She is the first wommon and first Black person to give the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention.

Category #2: PUBLISHERS

I am "the first publisher in North America committed to producing and distributing the work of all racial/cultural heritages, sexualities and classes. I publish high-quality writing encompassing a consciousness of the particular issues of identity and struggle that women of color face."

Category #3: BOOKS

"No, I mean flew. Oh, it's just foolishness, you know, but according to the story he wasn't running away. He was flying. He flew. You know, like a bird. Just stood up in the fields one day, ran up some hill, spun around a couple of times, and was lifted up in the air. Went right on back to wherever it was he came from. There's a big double-headed rock over the valley named for him. It like to killed the woman, the wife. I guess you could say 'wife.' Anyway she's supposed to have screamed out loud for days. And there's a ravine near here they call Ryna's Gulch, and sometimes you can hear this funny sound by it that the wind makes. People say it's the wife,...crying. Her name was Ryna. They say she screamed and screamed, lost her mind completely. You don't hear about women like that anymore, but there used to more--the kind of woman who couldn't live without a particular man. And when the man left, they lost their minds, or died or something. Love, I guess. But I always thought it was trying to take care of children by themselves, you know what I mean?"

Category #4: PUBLICATIONS

I am the first monthly publication by lesbians of color for all wimmin of color that comes out of the Southeast. I am covered with celebrating gay pride.

WORK WITH IT WIMMIN!!!

GAY PRIDE

what does it mean to YOU

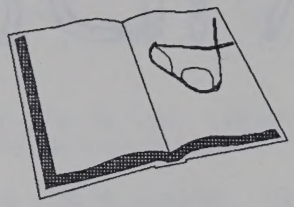
"Taking pride in oneself and having the opportunity to express that self pride publicly. It means confronting the silence of being a lesbian when society has labeled you as different and/or ill. Gay pride is a time to publicly celebrate our individuality."

"Gay pride means loving my family, my wife and my son and being who I am 365 days of the year. It is also feeling good about who I am and thanking all of the people, like my MOM and Mable Hampton, who have made it possible for me to be openly proud."

"The pride is in my heart, which allows me to love another woman freely."

JANICE L. WHATLEY

" How can you feel pride in your sexuality when that community holds onto the same "isms" that face you on the OUTSIDE - INSIDE ? I applaud any and everyone who shows pride in themselves with what or whomever they decide."



BOOK NOOK

I DREAM A WORLD: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America by Brian Lanker is available at Charis Books and More.

When you look at the book's cover, you may feel, as I did, a sense of authority, sensitivity, and "dues bein' paid". The cover portrait is of Septima Poinsette Clark, an unsung heroine of the Civil Rights Movement, whose distinctively strong spirit is likewise reflected in the faces of the other Women highlighted in this autobiographical anthology.

A magazine article announcing the publishing of this book gave me much to anticipate. I saw the book about two weeks after I'd arrived in Atlanta and was not disappointed. In short, it is a pictorial herstory of Black Women who have helped to shape America's Sisterhood.

The text is taken from interviews with the Women themselves. The breathtaking black and white photographs that accompany the text tell their stories emphatically and with eloquence. Though some of the pictures are more staged than others, each woman's individual elements are poignantly captured.

Their interests range from the arts to philanthropy and beyond. Some of my own role models appear on these pages: Ruby Dee, Barbara Jordan, Shirley Chisholm, Yvonne Brathwaite-Burke, Oprah Winfrey, and Odetta. There are other women of distinction represented as well. There's the story of the architect, Norma Merrick Sklarek, who was the first Black Woman licensed to practice in New York and California. The entrepreneur, Ophelia DeVore-Mitchell, tells of how her Black modeling agency, started in 1940, changed the face of advertising and opened new opportunities for her to achieve success in one of the most competitive businesses in the world.

Women of traditional and non-traditional roles are celebrated in this beautiful example of photojournalism. No time is better than now to celebrate our woman-ness and rarely have I seen a better vehicle than this wonderful time-capsule that takes us from post-slavery "can-do" mentalities to "what can-I-do" reverse discrimination survival.

A major undertaking to say the least, this was the brainchild of the author, Brian Lanker, a white, male photojournalist. The work was encouraged by Eastman Kodak Company management, which underwrote the project. Whatever else they may or may not be or do for us, they should be applauded and supported for this brilliant recording of the kudos due our "Sistahs".

After experiencing the stories in this book, I am left with an overwhelming sense of hope. Once again I've been given a vision of where Black Women have been, and where we can and will be; a vision facilitated by the sensitivity of the artist and his work.

LAURA HOWARD

LAURA has recently relocated to the Atlanta area and will be contributing to IMANI on a regular basis.

Women, Culture, & Politics (Vintage Books: New York, 1990) by Angela Davis is available in paperback ($9.95) at Charis Books and More.

A collection of essays and speeches by Angela Davis, Women Culture and Politics surveys economic and political issues of the past decade that have affected the global lives of women of color and illuminates those issues in the context of the 90's,

offering a new vision and voice for the future women's movements.

In this insightful and thought-provoking book, Davis outlines the history of the women's movement as two distinct continuums--one, invisible and supported predominately by white, middle-class women, the other, invisible and led by women of color. Davis urges these two movements to come together as a single continuum by the efforts of all women to create "a revolutionary, multi-racial women's movement that seriously addresses the main issues affecting poor and working-class women" (7). However, she warns that this process by which these two separate movements are brought together will not occur as the results of "intensified efforts to attract Latina women or Afro-American women or Asian or Native American women into the existing organizational forms dominated by white women of the more privileged economic strata." Instead she urges that the "particular concerns of women of color must be included in the agenda" (8). Davis' book presents many of the social and economic concerns of women of color and articulates the ways in which our political efforts affect the women's movement as a whole.

Davis concerns herself with issues that affect all women's lives--the economic and social conditions of poor and working-class women and women of color. By way of several essays, Davis reveals the various ways in which racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, etc. play a part in defining the political issues projected and articulated by the media of dominant culture. Davis suggests that all political issues, such as abortion rights, rape, and homelessness, be examined as social and economic issues that primarily affect women of color, and she offers insight as to how those issues are redefined by this perspective.

For instance, Davis describes the abortion rights issue as being based on the premise that women have a right to control their own bodies. However, Davis notes that the abortion rights movement, which gained momentum in the past decade, has overlooked another instance--the forced sterilization of poor women of color--in which women are disenfranchised of our right to control their own bodies. Davis reminds us that we must fight for our right to limit our families, but we must maintain our right to expand our families, as well.

Finally, Davis points to the imperialist forces of western governments that economically colonize people of color, especially those of the third world, as the larger social and historical context of the sexual violence that constantly threatens women's lives. Davis suggests that an end to this sexual violence can only be achieved by questioning the historical and ideological foundation of that violence and its location within the larger socio-political context of the colonization of countries, such as South Africa, which are predominately populated by people of color. Davis writes:

> the complete elimination of sexist violence will ultimately depend on our ability to forge a new and revolutionary global order, in which every form of oppression and violence against humankind is obliterated. (51)

Anyone who shares Davis' dream of global solidarity will find Women, Culture, & Politics to be as brilliant and bold as the vision inspired by it. Davis illuminates the social and economic political issues that must be addressed by the global power and strength of all women who strive to change this world.

AMI R. MATTISON

Dear Imani:

Thank you so much for your publication. This newsletter is greatly needed, especially for our younger sisters. Years ago, there was no avenue available in the Southeastern region for those of us who made the decision to be lesbian. It's needed for our lesbian mothers, who like myself, are almost the "forgotten" few. We need ways of keeping in touch.

Your newsletter gives us the opportunity to show off our creative talents, be expressive, make contact with our kindred spirits and acknowledge our culture past, present, and future.

I wish to thank you, the total staff for your complete dedication and love for your sistahs. It truly takes an act of love to conceive such a lovely example of our blackness, lesbianism and femininity.

Thanks for the educational writings of your featured artists, especially the gifted and talented writings of Ms. Patricia A. Jackson, this woman has power! She's like a breath of fresh air!!!

Keep on Writing Sistahs!
Sistah in Spirit
Bettye

Ask Kelly.....

dear kelly,

My lover of 5 years just recently passed of ovarian cancer. I'm having an exceedingly hard time coping with her death. What do I do to pull myself up again and love again?

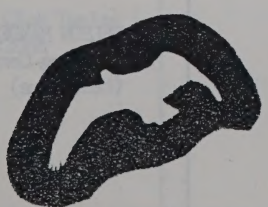
desperately seeking help.

dear desperately seeking help,

i'm sorry to hear of your lover's passing. the death of a loved one is painful in any situation, but so often, in same-sex relationships, our grieving is invalidated by society and is done, to some degree, in secrecy.

try perhaps approaching the loss in terms of losing the pain but not losing your lover. you'll never "lose" her as long as she is within you. you can feel her whenever you want her near. the memory of the woman you were fortunate enough to love, if physically only for a time, is yours forever.

secondly, i would suggest surrounding yourself with women you care about, since we are so warm and nurturing. there are books you can read and support groups you can chose to be a part of, but i strongly recommend you also find the place in your center and touch her, caress her ever so gently. this is the place your memories of your lover reside. some women use mediation, prayer, chanting, etc.. to touch this place where the power dwells to transform pain to peace.



dear kelly,

i'm in love, ok? i've been offered a wonderful opportunity to practice in another state. my lover is steadfastly against moving, and i don't want to make the move without her. what can i do to change her mind? we need the money.

broke in LA

dear broke in LA,

girlfriend, first of all, you didn't say how far you would be from your lady love. this is important because if the distance is reasonable, commuting on the weekends or every other weekend might be an option. also, we shouldn't assume that the criteria for a good, solid, successful relationship is that two sisters are living in the same crib. i admit, with some relationships i've experienced, cohabitation was mandatory. (But that's a little too close to home.) i recommend you talk to your lover about why she doesn't want to move. you may find that she has specific reasons to stay put. or she may find that her reasons are really not as important as she thought. suggest to her that the two of you sit down and come up with separate lists of "reasons to move" and "reasons not to move." and most of all, determine your priorities--what is most important to each of you. although you may have a wonderful relationship, you each may feel the need to follow your own respective hearts. the result of doing that may make your decisions easier. the last thing you want is for one of you to do something she doesn't want and regret it and resent the other.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED
3 Jazz at Grant Park with Dizzy Gillespie, Ojeda Penn and others 653-7146 King Sunny Ade at Center Stage, 8pm 874-1511	4	5	6
10	11	12 The Grand Kubuzi Theatre of Japan at The Fox, 8pm through the 13th 881-2000	13
17 FATHER'S DAY Amina Claudine Myers at The MLK Jr Center 524-1956 Reggae Sunsplash at The Fox 881-2000	18 Book Signing at Spelman, 6-7pm, with: Evelyn C. White Angela Davis Lynda Holmes Bylle Avery 753-0916	19 Tracy Chapman at Lakewood Amphitheatre 8pm 627-6739	20 The Four Tops at Chastain Park 892-2414
24	25	26	27 NELSON MANDELA at the King Center (tentative)

JUNE 1990

THURS	FRI	SAT
	1 Max Roach and Roy Brown trio at Center Stage, 9pm 874-1511	2 Tenor Madness - Jazz at Grant Park, 3pm 653- 7146 Max Roach - Cecil Taylor Duo at the 14th Street Playhouse, midnight 653-7146
7 Charis - Women and Alcohol, 7:30pm 524-0304	8 JVC Jazz Festival at Lakewood Amphitheatre 6pm 627-6739	9
14 Charis - Feminist Consciousness Raising for the 90's, 7:30pm Eartha Kitt at Variety Playhouse thru June 16th 524-7354 East Coast Lesbian's Festival thru the 17th	15 Johnny Mathis at Chastain Park thru the 16th 892-2414	16 Budweiser Superfest at The Fulton County Stadium, 5:30pm, with: MAZE, Patti Labelle, Stephaine Mills, Regina Belle and others.
21 Charis - The Power of Speaking in Women's Lives, 7:30pm	22 The Four Tops at Chastain Park thru the 23rd 892-2414	23 South Carolina Gay and Lesbian Pride March (803) 796-3615 or 254-3799
28 Charis - Club Twelve 7:30pm	29	30

ONGOING

"Black Art-Ancestral Legacy: The African Impluse in African-American Art" exhibit at the High Museum of Art, May 22 - Aug 5, 898-9285

"Haiti (A Dream)" at Seven Stages, May 24 - June 10, 523-7647

"ZION!" at Theatre in the Square, May 2 - June 3, 422-8369

"A True Likeness: The Black South of Richard Samuel Roberts" at the Hammond House, thru June 3, 752-8215

The APEX Museum (African American Panoramic Experience) - continuous exhibits 521-APEX

UPCOMING

Atlanta Jazz Series, July 6-8 and Aug 3-5, 653-7146

Betty Carter & her trio at Center Stage Theatre, July 6

Janet Jackson at The Omni, July 19

Harry Belafonte at Chastain Park, July 20 - 21

Anita Baker at Lakewood Amphitheatre, July 27

Soul II Soul at Lakewood Amphitheatre, July 29

Gay Games in Vancouver, Canada, Aug 4 - 11

National Black Arts Festival, July 27- Aug 5

FESTIVALS

Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, Aug 15 - 19, (616) 757-4766

Rhythm Fest, Aug 30 - Sept 3, (919) 682-6374

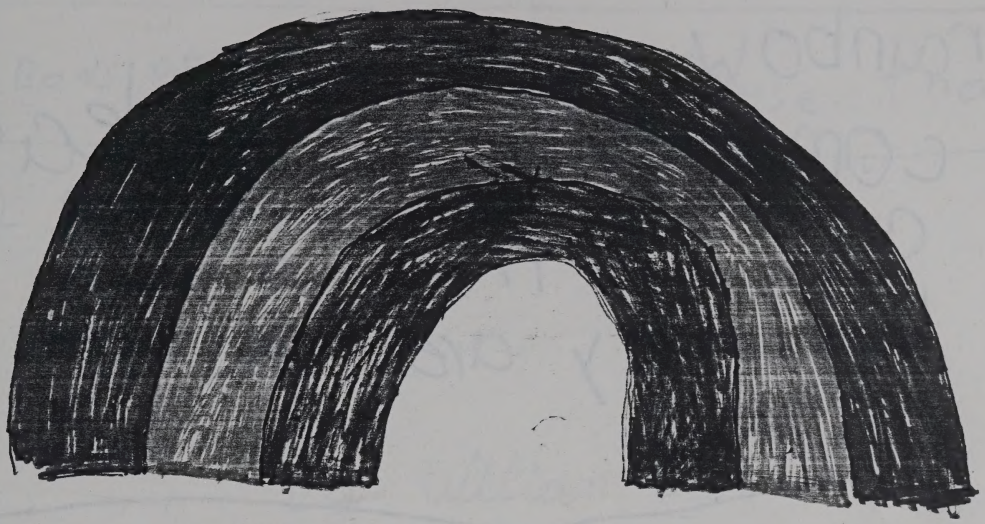
CALENDAR EXTRAS

The Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus and the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus in a joint concert at Southside High School, June 3, 3:30pm and 7pm, 378-9676

Sisters in Session: About our Reproductive Health - Dr. Dorothy Height will be the keynote speaker- at Spelman College, June 17 - 19, 753-0916

"Wizard of Hip or When in Doubt Slamdunk" a play by Jomandi at 14th Street Playhouse, June 15 - July 1, 873-1099

Youth of Imani



by
Shemika
age 8

rainbow rainbow pleas
come down you
are so nice to me.
but why are you so
colorful!!

by Naeemah age 6
the end

rainBows is Pr+ty Becouse Thay Have DeFite CoLor and I Like the CoLor.

rainBows are So Pra+ty Becouse thay HAVe So mene CoLor.

by Willion age 6